REIMAGINING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

MAKING LEARNING MORE PERSONAL AND ACCESSIBLE
As L&D professionals continue to refine the learning experience to make it more personal for learners, discovering what learners want is the key to progress. Many organizations are gearing up to invest in big data analytics. Beyond asking what learners want through surveys and evaluations, data analytics will show what learners want by evaluating how they are using and responding to the learning technology.

Although many organizations are unable to increase investment in learning programs, research from Human Capital Media Advisory group, the research division of Chief Learning Officer magazine, shows that L&D experts believe the industry is doing pretty well. The focus is on making meaningful improvements to current methodologies, rather than implementing drastic change. Survey respondents were positive about this year and optimistic about next year, even though little change is expected in budgets and learning delivery methods.

Consistent with the 2017 survey, most respondents this year had positive outlook for the future. Also consistent with the 2017 survey, most organizations plan to increase their learning analytics capabilities over the next few years, although the rest of the learning budget will remain relatively similar.
The results of both this year’s and last year’s survey showed that learning metrics are currently gathered through mostly manual methods. Over the next year there will be some increased investment in learning analytics, even though the overall budget for learning programs will remain about the same.

To help with the desired move toward enabling big data analytics across multiple HR systems, one fairly simple improvement is to begin using electronic evaluations, rather than paper surveys and other manual methods. These allow for a more granular view of data and give L&D professionals the ability to review trends over time. There are quite a few low-cost or free options for implementing electronic surveys (examples include SharePoint surveys, SurveyMonkey, Google Forms and Checkbox Survey), or you can utilize the survey component of the software your organization already uses.

Removing the manual component from evaluations will save time, reduce errors and begin the process of enabling big data analytics. Most survey responses indicated that organizations intend to invest in analytics in the near future, with the intent that data across multiple HR systems will be collated (i.e., big data). The more data you have available electronically before making the investment, the more valuable this investment will be. Additionally, improving the availability of survey results will aid decision-makers in appropriately responding to what the learners want.

Since L&D decisions are made by top-level leaders and not the learners, the learning evaluations need to be as insightful as possible to ensure learners have an impactful voice. In the interest of “asking the learners what they want,” L&D professionals need to be progressive in asking the right questions. Don’t just stick with the stock survey questions, but be extremely creative, critical and analytical in selecting questions that provide specific, tangible insight on how to provide what the learners want.

Obviously, this is easier said than done. The CLO State of the Industry survey consistently shows that difficulty measuring the impact of learning on the business. Take social learning technologies, for example. While 73.9 percent of organizations have adopted social learning strategies to some extent, many organizations find it challenging to assess its impact. Employee uptake and assessment capability are also top challenges.

One way to address this problem is by putting the responsibility back on the learners. For example, the survey could ask, “How will you know that this material has positively impacted your ability to do your job?” or “What questions would you ask on a survey that would actually provide helpful information for the instructors?”
When the questions we ask are insightful, the responses will tend to be insightful as well, and this is one way to generate new content and new direction for course material. Learners are already used to finding, rating and sharing the information they need. By turning over content curation to users, the L&D team can ensure that the content will be useful and practical.

On the other hand, learner preference should not always be the sole — or even the primary — support in decision-making, and learner feedback should be carefully weighed against expert opinion. A recent Business Insider study shows that students learn more efficiently through text than through screens, even though their preference is digital learning. “While new forms of classroom technology like digital textbooks are more accessible and portable, it would be wrong to assume that students will automatically be better served by digital reading simply because they prefer it.”

Learning delivery decisions are driven by budget and efficiency to get the most content to the most people at the least cost, and most organizations have already found a comfortable balance of these considerations. Although there may come a proper time for revolutionizing the content delivery methods, effort may be better spent now by focusing on how to improve your current methods rather than campaigning to change to different methods.

Sometimes the most revolutionary changes are achieved through incremental improvement. For example, in the classroom setting, consider the refreshments, the room atmosphere, the class size and any other physical element that could be improved at low cost. In e-learning, consider how the setting can be improved in an auditory and visual fashion.

The use of social technologies may be the area with the biggest improvement potential. The survey showed that social technologies are primarily used to provide on-demand access to real-time discussion, training, support and expertise. Continual reassessment of the use of social technologies will help determine learner preference and the greatest area increasing impact.


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The image contains a table titled “LEARNING DELIVERY DECISION-MAKERS” showing the distribution of decision-making roles among senior leadership, business line leaders, and CLO. The percentages are as follows:

- Senior leadership: 73%
- Business line leaders: 49%
- CLO: 37%

The image also has a chart titled “PRIMARY USES OF SOCIAL LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES” with the following categories and percentages:

- Provide on-demand access to real-time discussion, training, support and expertise: 51%
- Foster on-the-job social learning through communities of practice: 45%
- Allow users to interact through wikis, blogs, discussion forums and repositories: 41%
- Provide learning environments for coaches, mentors and instructors to interact and share knowledge: 41%
- Grant real-time access to thought leaders, instructors and subject-matter experts: 31%
CONCLUSION

Although the survey results are positive, it would be a mistake to feel that we’ve arrived. L&D professionals, of all people, know the value of lifelong learning and embracing change. As the industry changes, we must change along with it. Having the courage to revolutionize our thinking will be what allows us to continually improve.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS AND TRENDS

2018 SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

• Most respondents feel relatively optimistic about learning delivery for the next year.

• There will be some increased investment in learning analytics.

• E-learning and in-person training continue to be the primary modalities L&D uses to deliver content.

• Growing the succession pipeline and retaining high-potential employees are the biggest goals for leadership development this year.

• Social technologies are primarily used to provide on-demand access to real-time discussion, training, support and expertise.

2017 TRENDS

• Difficulty measuring the impact of social learning technologies on the business and employee uptake continue to be the top challenges (consistent with 2018 results).

• Product knowledge and onboarding are still considered best suited for social learning, compared to other learning content (consistent with 2018 results).

• Social learning technologies are typically used by most organizations to provide on-demand access to real-time discussion, training, support and expertise (consistent with 2018 results).

• Targeted leadership skills were strategic planning and business acumen (different from 2018 results).

• Targeted skills for front-line management were coaching and communication (different from 2018 results).

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BetterUp is the first leadership development platform to connect coaching to measurable business outcomes and lasting behavior change. Uniquely scalable and completely turnkey, we match employees at all levels with world-class coaches and evidence-based strategies best suited to your company’s culture, learning styles, and goals. BetterUp is the perfect complement to your traditional training workshops and e-learning programs. The convenience and affordability of our mobile solution means you can offer weekly development sessions to your people, turning newly-learned behaviors into sustainable habits.

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CLO BREAKFAST CLUB

The Chief Learning Officer Breakfast Club series has an 11-year history of connecting leaders over breakfast to make the most of the linkage between learning and development and business strategy. The morning-long discussion encourages dialogue among learning leaders and provides them the opportunity to interact with a panel of industry experts.

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CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER

Chief Learning Officer magazine focuses on solutions for enterprise productivity in the enterprise learning market. Named Best New Publication of 2002 by the American Society of Business Publication Editors, Chief Learning Officer features top experts in the corporate training industry writing to executives and officers about the importance, benefits and advancements of a properly trained workforce. Chief Learning Officer has its own family of supporting publications, including the CLOmedia.com Web site and the Chief Learning Officer Executive Briefings electronic newsletter.

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